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Challenges and Opportunities of Curbing Urban Corruption and Building Professional Integrity: Experiences of Planners in South Africa and Zambia

--Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract

Urban corruption can hinder integrated planning, skew the equitable distribution of public investments, and capture urban management processes to the detriment of the public. Yet, we argue in this article, the city scale has been largely overlooked in contemporary anti-corruption research, and – by the same token – urban scholars only recently started paying attention to the role of corruption in urban development. Based on extensive quantitative and qualitative research with planning professionals in South Africa and Zambia, we firstly explore the complex dynamics of urban corruption and the challenges it poses in the respective national planning spheres. Based on this exploration, we then motivate for the need to move beyond compliance-focused understandings of corruption as the sole basis for developing strategies against city-level corruption. Finally, we outline an agenda for possible future research and action on urban integrity.

Keywords: Corruption; Integrity; Urban Planning; City Planners; Zambia; South Africa

1. Introduction

Urban corruption can hinder integrated planning, skew the equitable distribution of public investments, and capture urban management processes to the detriment of the public. Globally, one in five people reports having been asked for a bribe when accessing basic public services, which climbs to one in three in countries such as Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, or Uganda (Transparency International 2015). A more recent Transparency International (2019) survey explored the extent to which actions to counter corruption have been successful, indicating the limited progress made so far: some 60% of people across the world report that they feel corruption has worsened in the twelve months preceding the survey. This proportion reached 64% in South Africa and 66% in Zambia in the 2019 global corruption barometer (Transparency International 2019).

A widely shared definition of corruption is the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Friedrich 2017). This definition encompasses a vast set of practices at and across different scales, from street-level bribery to international procurement fraud, money laundering and state capture. While corruption occurs virtually everywhere – and is thus not inherent to either a particular person, a specific place, or a certain culture – its drivers differ greatly. Critical social scientists have rightly pointed to the explanatory limits of rational choice economics for understanding corruption (Khan 2006) and have argued instead for a reading of corruption as a *situated normative discourse* about the abuse of entrusted power (Doshi & Ranganathan 2019). In consequence, as an object of study, corruption represents a dynamic and moving target, as its different evocations produce different ways in which we imagine the state, its power(s) and how they operate in specific places (Gupta 2012). This necessitates taking a relational approach to studying corruption, one that leaves behind assumptions of universal drivers in favour of more contextual analysis, which puts situated ethics, local histories, and networked power relations centre stage.

In light of current urbanization and development trends, we propose that corruption has a particularly negative effect on growing cities, hindering the urgent realization of participatory planning, inclusive development, and equitable urban management. Yet the city scale has been largely overlooked in contemporary anti-corruption research, and – by the same token – urban

scholarship has only recently started paying attention to the urban dynamics of illicit practices such as corruption (for example see Chiodelli and Moroni 2015; Chiodelli 2019; Cobbinah and Darkwah 2017; Deuskar 2019; Doshi & Ranganathan 2019; Kim 2020; Inverardi-Ferri 2021). Given the rate of urbanization particularly in secondary cities of the global south, we can also observe a rapid rise in the demand for urban land. In this context of high and growing demand for developable land, public-sector decision-making on urban land use and the provision of urban infrastructure has significant implications for determining the financial value of land. This drives up potential windfall profits to be made from such transactions. Moreover, the African continent is viewed as having the highest real estate value growth potential globally (HSBC 2017), and urban land and real estate prices continue to grow. For example, some peri-urban areas of Kigali experienced a more than 1000-fold increase in land value during the early 2000s (Kopanyi and Murray 2017).

Rapidly rising land prices thus invite financial speculation, which further constrains access to land for poor communities: often, they are simply priced out of the market, but corruption can also come into play, e.g. when access can only be secured through a bribe, by selling one's vote or by supporting a local power broker (Deuskar 2019; Beg 2021). Corruption can also curb equitable and fair access by skewing major infrastructure investments to serve elite urban enclaves and up-market developments, often by-passing poorer communities in much greater need of basic public service provision (Murillo et al. 2021). Overall, empirical evidence supports the view that women, the poor, and other marginalized groups suffer most from corruption in connection with land (Justesen and Bjornskov 2012; Zinnbauer 2013).

At the same time, research has also shown that corruption in planning and urban development is notoriously hard to counter, evermore so in resource-poor and rapidly growing cities. For example, in many African cities, residents and planning professionals alike have to content with a complex set of structural issues, including: weak and under-capacitated state institutions and administrative systems; the extent of 'informal' development by both poor and marginalized actors as well as large-scale property developers; high levels of clientelism and patrimonialism; the range of different land tenure systems and unclear jurisdictions in many cities; the spatial and bureaucratic legacies of colonial planning laws and finally, the discretionary nature of planning decision-making itself, which is often contested and open to interpretation (Cirolia & Berrisford 2017, Kamete 2007, 2013, Pieterse & Parnell 2014).

This arguably offers rich breeding grounds for corruption, which local governments have traditionally sought to tackle with regulatory responses such as tighter procurement laws, more stringent planning and design standards, or more expansive reporting mandates. While such compliance-focused approaches usually look good on paper and appease nervous international donors, current anti-corruption research suggest that, particularly in contexts with high levels of informality, many of these regulatory interventions might be largely ineffective, or even counterproductive (Zinnbauer 2019, Camargo & Koechlin 2018). Instead, using a relational approach to understanding urban corruption dynamics allows us to consider some important and interconnected tensions, such as the high costs of implementing and monitoring compliance mechanisms in the face of often weak state capacity, the narrow focus of many of those mechanisms on the individual, thus disregarding the networked nature of corruption, and the fact that more 'red tape' often means processes take longer, are more expensive and involve more entities, thus creating additional opportunities for rent-seeking and corruption to occur (Camargo & Koechlin 2018).

In turn, anti-corruption scholars and practitioners have become increasingly interested in exploring alternatives to conventional regulatory, punitive, and compliance-focused measures. Described as the "evolution of anti-corruption strategies from a philosophy of compliance to one of integrity"

Zinnbauer (2019: 6), more attention is being paid to the question what it takes for individuals to 'do the right thing'. Of course, pursuing integrity-focused approaches does not discount necessary compliance mechanisms, targeted at the more structural drivers of corruption. Moreover, some tools, such as public service charters promise to effectively combine both notions. However, given the complexity, situatedness and social relatedness of corruption in urban planning, and the consequentially limited success of solely regulatory and punitive anti-corruption mechanisms, the idea that it takes more than just better laws and more robust enforcement to address this intractable issue shaped our research agenda and informed our specific focus on the urban planning profession.

This article presents empirical research findings on the urban planning and corruption nexus in South Africa and Zambia. An online survey and qualitative interviews in both countries as well as a Qualitative Action Experiment (QAE) targeting Zambian planning professionals were used to gather a rich data set. Our goal was twofold: First, to understand the depth and complexity of corruption as a pertinent yet often overlooked issue in urban planning; and second to explore the efficacy of an integrity approach – briefly defined as encouraging and supporting urban planners to act more ethically – to counter urban corruption.

Hence, the first section of the paper draws together current theoretical and conceptual debates in anti-corruption, planning and urban development research to outline some of the most salient dynamics of urban corruption, particularly in African cities. The second section sets out the research methodology. The third section presents selected results from our research in Zambia and South Africa. In conclusion, we argue that the research contributes new perspectives to understanding corruption in planning, in turn laying a practical foundation for expanding our view beyond compliance to also include professional integrity as a means for tackling urban corruption.

2. Theorizing the role of corruption in planning

There have been significant shifts over time in how we understand the drivers of corruption and, in consequence, how to combat it. Cold War-era modernization theories and Weberian notions of rational bureaucracy explained corruption as symptomatic of weak states, poor separation between the public and private realms, and inchoate development in so-called developing countries. The neoliberal orthodoxy of the 1990s, inspired by neoclassical economists and political scientists, went on to define corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain, adopting a strong position on the need to counter it through policies and regulations. Corruption was viewed as a burden of the state and, following the economic doctrine of the time, state reduction, liberalization, good governance, and expanding markets were seen as primary structural antidotes to state-level corruption.

Reinforcing this mainstream perspective on the structural forces of corruption are two 'dominant narratives' that try to explain the individual non-compliance of local government officials: a 'capacity explanation' which assumes officials lack the skills or knowledge to apply complex regulations (e.g. Draai & Oshoniyi 2013, Khambule 2020), and an 'ethics explanation' which assumes local officials are prioritising personal or partisan gain over public benefit (e.g. Jiménez et al. 2012). Both explanations focus on the individual behaviour of officials within the state and assumptions regarding their personal ethics. Ledger (2020) situates this position within rational choice theory, which in this case would assume that officials calculate the potential personal costs and benefits of a particular course of action and then choose accordingly. Within this *homo economicus* framework of action, compliance mechanisms and corresponding legal penalties were thus seen as adequate deterrents to corruption.

More recent research however has started to question neoliberal and rational choice explanations of corruption in government and their attendant policy implications. Different scholars have pointed to the importance of wider economic, political, and social factors including the situated nature of ethics (Brown & Cloke 2011), the socially constructed nature of corruption (Granovetter 2007), the varied forms of patronage networks of politicians (Auerbach & Kruks-Wisner 2020) and the extent of 'informality' within the state and beyond it (Bolt 2020), and historical dynamics and path-dependency influencing power relations imbued in both corruption and anti-corruption discourses (Doshi & Rangnathan 2019; Engels 2017). As we show below, this relational, more holistic understanding of corruption also resonates with recent conceptualizations of urban planning as a negotiated practice, subject to deliberation and individual judgement, rather than as an act of simple rule-following and linear implementation (Cirolia & Berrisford 2017). Hence, we propose that how we understand the urban planning processes also fundamentally shapes how we understand urban corruption.

Chiodelli (2019) and Chiodelli and Moroni (2015) have argued that urban planning is particularly susceptible to corrupt influences due to the constitutive duties of most planning systems. These usually include future-oriented planning at various scales, accompanied by the regulation of land use and infrastructure development. Chiodelli (2019) vividly illustrates where the planning process provides opportunities for manipulation and malfeasance in the Italian context. Based on the forensic analysis of a Milanese court case, he shows how the margin of discretion legally permitted by the urban planning decision-making process allowed corruption to flourish in an environment where considerable economic returns could be derived from favourable planning decisions, and where the local mafia historically exerted pressure to influence local government processes. In this case, opportunities for corruption arose throughout the planning cycle. In the first phase, during the formulation of a spatial plan, powerful interests were able to push for particular areas to be earmarked for development. While planners followed formal procedures in strict compliance with existing law, they also admitted that many decisions were made in response to expressions of political intent rather than being based on technical rationales or considerations of the greater public good. As a result, private interests benefitted from land reassigned as developable and politicians made illicit private gains through exerting pressure in the decision-making process. In the second phase, during the implementation of the plan, corruption continued to occur through favourably interpreting and bending existing planning regulations or direct fraud. Though planning decisions were submitted to democratically elected bodies for approval, this approval was often blanket, given the complex nature of decisions and the absence of skills in the political body to detect corruption. As Chiodelli (2019: 1620) remarks: "[…] the sheer mass of intricacies, complex procedures, and myriad technicalities that characterise the Italian planning system ensure that scrutiny is very difficult, and the fraud will almost never come to light." This case not only highlights the inherently political nature of planning, but also shows that shifts away from merely technical and rational planning approaches towards more deliberative and participatory forms, which inevitably involve more actors and their divergent interests, has created both advantages and drawbacks.

Our understanding of how corruption materializes in local planning systems and distorts equitable planning outcomes requires even more nuanced attention to the relationship between structural and individual forces when we look at the intricacies of planning contemporary African cities. Across the continent, colonial-era planning laws and outdated plans, as well as chronically strained municipal finances continue to create difficult regulatory environments to effectively steer urban development, often coupled with a shortage of qualified planners trained to navigate these systems (Watson 2013). In addition, urban informality also plays a big role in shaping the form and function of African cities. As Deuskar (2019) argues urban informality may appear chaotic but functions on the basis of complex and well-established social, political and cultural relationships. The distribution of benefits such as land and services to poor communities may regularly take place in exchange for

money or political support, i.e. as a form of clientelism, rather than as part of a planned public sector programme. Powerful state actors and politicians who benefit have little incentive to change this system and many communities may also see this as the only way to secure public goods from an otherwise unresponsive state (Murillo et al. 2021).

Thus, as Cirolia and Berrisford (2017) show in the contexts of Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Harare, planning implementation and outcomes are subject to a wide variety of influences beyond the regulatory planning system. Rather than planning being a product of collaborative decision-making towards a shared vision, it is:

> "… built on persistent and power laden compromises, contests, and deals among various arms of the state, civil society, and the local and international private sector (in particular developers and lenders). It reflects the actions and agendas of a whole range of stakeholders who together work to configure a fragile system which is constituted through and co-constitutive of each urban context." (Cirolia & Berrisford 2017: 71)

The authors therefore refer to planning in these situations as 'negotiated', as it is subject to both explicit and tacit power relations rather than just being the result of consensus-building efforts or data-driven decision-making. However, context differs and so do planning practices and outcomes: in Addis Ababa with a strong state and almost no private sector the state can construct the city to match the master plans, although this has been challenged by community protest; in Nairobi international infrastructure funders have extensive influence on the state, and builders of formal and informal structures are able to proceed without planning permission or with negotiated permission outside of legal requirements, leaving local government to undertake retroactive approval or demolition; in Harare the national state allocates new urban land for development but it is difficult to assess if this aligns with plans or with patronage efforts. Hence, the authors argue that there are clear logics at work in each of these cities which however do not align with the 'virtuous cycle' of planning assumed in Western planning discourses. Nonetheless, they are logics which can be tracked and understood as the basis for possible action.

Explaining planning systems as negotiated and context-sensitive also laterally links to research which has questioned mainstream definitions of corruption as a sole problem of governance. Ledger (2020) advances the term 'non-compliance' rather than corruption, to show that both codified and uncodified rules interact in complex ways to influence bureaucratic decision-making.

This notion of 'non-compliance' allows us to start interrogating urban corruption beyond its structural drivers and to consider their relationship with the complex human dimension of everyday planning practice in African cities. For example, in the case of South Africa, local governments consistently fail to meet prescribed policy standards in financial and supply-chain management, despite extensive local government regulations which have been steadily tightened over the last decade in an attempt to enforce compliance. Ledger's examination of the reasons for non-compliance shows that it can certainly occur for personal enrichment or gaining power – in other words as forms of corruption. But it can also happen in response to different sets of professional priorities or personal moral commitments not captured in the prescribed rules, the following of 'un-codified rules', political interference, or due to the low levels of skills, capacity and resources in many local governments. She therefore suggests the idea of 'logics of appropriateness' as a framework to understand the variegated nature of non-compliance. This approach also considers how an individual's sense of identity, morals, and values – in other words their personal integrity – interacts at a particular point in time with institutional norms and structural forces to have 'normative validity' for carrying out the professional task at hand. This is not to suggest that the

mentioned structural drivers of corruption can simply be undone by individual changes in behaviour. At the same time however, the discretionary nature of decision-making in urban planning and the fiduciary duty of the profession to the public good still leaves room for very different courses of action, which are ultimately guided by an individual's moral compass and sense of professional integrity.

Again, considering that many African planners still have to contend with a whole host of structural challenges – e.g., outdated colonial-era planning laws and economic path-dependencies, strained municipal finances and political clientelism (Watson, 2013), it is important to reiterate that non-compliance with existing policies and bureaucratic procedures does not automatically equal corruption. After all, how we understand planning processes in African cities also shapes where we locate certain practices on the – arguably iridescent – spectrum between non-compliance and corruption. To put it bluntly and following Ledger's 'logics of appropriateness', non-compliance can sometimes even be the more ethical choice to safeguard one's professional integrity as well as the public interest. This is particularly true for politically and legally contested environments, and the challenges posed by overlapping land tenure systems in many African cities are a case in point: In Ghana 80% of the land is controlled by traditional authorities who believe it is their right to control use of land, while political elites attempt to use the formal planning system in ways that counter both the interests of planners and traditional leaders (Cobbinah & Darkwah 2017). In South Africa, a significant proportion of the rural population lives on communal land holdings under the jurisdiction and custodianship of traditional leaders. Residents occupy land under a system of rights conveyed through oral traditions and therefore have little formal tenure security (Winkler 2019). However, the same land also falls under formal municipal administration as well as national planning law, leading to immense confusion for local planners, which negatively impacts the speed and efficacy of their decision-making.

Taken together, the above-mentioned factors create complex challenges that leave urban planning systems vulnerable to corrupt influences. At the same time, we have proposed that focusing our attention solely on the legal, macro-economic and governmental drivers of urban corruption discounts the – arguably more ambivalent but nonetheless powerful – role of personal ethics and professional integrity in its making and potential unmaking. Considering that urban planners with their expert qualifications and collective professional mores are key players within the urban development system, called upon to mediate between public and private interests in often indeterminable environments but also vested with discretionary duty, we thus propose that it is important to understand how they experience corruption in their daily practice and what role their sense of professional integrity plays in how they act within this contested professional environment.

3. **Research methodology**

As Zinnbauer (2019) expands, integrity lies at the heart of the relationship between society and professional communities. As society, we entrust certain professions – such as doctors, accountants, and lawyers but also urban planners – with a fiduciary duty to balance private interests in the ultimate service of protecting the public good. In turn they are granted a certain level of autonomy to develop and regulate their professional codes of conduct free from political interference (Freidson 2001; Kuus 2021). Organized professional communities thus act as fulcrums of integrity: they define shared knowledge canons and ethical responsibilities, harness collective norms and accord professional status, often through mandatory memberships and continued professional development programs. They might even wield disciplinary tools to penalize unethical behavior and safeguard the collective image (Haynes & Gazley 2011). Thus, beyond the question how planners experience and navigate corruption in their day-to-day practice, we were also interested in better understanding how they tried to safeguard their professional sense of integrity within existing professional integrity infrastructures or despite a lack thereof.

Hence, to develop a fine-grained understanding of urban corruption dynamics and the professional integrity landscape of urban planning in South Africa and Zambia, between October 2019 and March 2021, we pursued three concurrent strategies to collect primary empirical data. Firstly, we carried out a semi-structured practitioner survey with more than 60 questions, administered online in Zambia and South Africa between February and September 2020. Further outreach to planning professionals was conducted via two national professional planning bodies, the Zambian Institute for Planners (ZIP) and the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN), as well as dedicated social media forums and WhatsApp groups. The survey elicited 113 complete responses in South Africa and 98 in Zambia (African Centre for Cities & Centre for Urban Research and Planning. Cities of Integrity Survey 2020).

Secondly, the survey was complemented by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with practicing planners and representatives of planning associations. In South Africa, 26 individuals participated in semi-structured interviews or small focus group discussions between October 2019 and December 2020. In Zambia, we conducted 53 individual interviews as well as two focus group discussions, with 13 participants in each, between January 2020 and January 2021.

Complementing these more conventional quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, in early October 2019, we also carried out a Qualitative Action Experiment in Lusaka, Zambia. This two-and-a-half-day workshop program for 39 Zambian planners served as an experimental process and tool for exploring real-life integrity issues in the local planning community and collectively generating ideas for possible interventions. The QAE contained several focus-group modules and was accompanied by a baseline/endline survey. It was also followed up by individual participant check-ins between January 2020 and March 2021, as well as an evaluative one-day workshop in Lusaka, in March 2021. A form of participatory action research, the QAE methodology sought to build integrity *while* studying corruption. Thus, it occupied a middle ground between reflective observation and engaged activism, discussing practical solutions that allowed for a "knowing with" instead of simply a "knowing about" participants (Siame, Nkula-Wenz and Zinnbauer, 2020).

4. Case studies

South Africa and Zambia were selected as case study countries for several reasons. For one, the prevalence of corruption is reportedly high in both countries, providing a prolific context for studying the topic. Secondly, national and local governments in both countries have also identified corruption as a key blockage to growth, making it a political issue of high priority. Finally, both countries have also recently introduced legal reforms in their planning processes, bolstering the authority of their respective national professional planning associations. At the same time, South Africa and Zambia differ when it comes to how their respective planning professions are governed, making them interesting cases to compare: While South Africa has a comparatively higher number of registered planners per capita, registration with its professional body is not mandatory to practice as a planner. This means that professionals from adjacent spatial disciplines – such as architecture or urban design – can practice as planners without professional accreditation. In contrast, Zambia's planning legislation prescribes that only planners accredited by the Zambian Institute of Planners (ZIP) can legally practice. In consequence, this provides ZIP, at least theoretically, with more comprehensive oversight and disciplinary power than their South African counterpart.

South Africa

South Africa is a highly urbanized country. A total of 66% of South Africa's population lives in urban areas and cities. The planning profession in South Africa has a long and contentious history (KENA Consult, 2015). Legislative steps to reform the profession have included enactment of the Planning Profession Act, Act 36 of 2002, which established the South African Council of Planners (SACPLAN) to serve as the profession's regulator and accreditor, and the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 2013 (SPLUMA), which came into effect in 2015. SACPLAN's public registry of planners indicates that there are a total of 4,585 registered planners in South Africa. For a population of nearly sixty million (76 planners per million people), the number of planners in South Africa compares relatively well with other African countries but poorly with countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and USA (KENA Consult, 2015).

Zambia

Urban and regional planning in Zambia dates back to pre-independence in 1964 and was based on the UK's 1948 Town and Country Planning Act (TCA). Berrisford (2011) notes that changes to the TCA in 1976 were to partially accommodate informal settlements. In 2011, Zambia enacted the Urban and Regional Planners Act which empowered the Zambia Institute of Planners (ZIP) as the sole regulator and accreditor of planners. In 2015, the country introduced the Urban and Regional Planning Act to introduce integrated development planning. ZIP recorded a significant growth and professional clout from 2013 onwards, strengthened by enhanced post-graduate planning opportunities at the University of Zambia. ZIP's official records show a jump from 300 registered and accredited planners in 2011 to over 800 accredited planners by 2019 (Siame et al., 2020). With 17 million people and an urbanisation rate of 41%, this number falls short in meeting the fast-rising demand for planning services (48 planners per million people).

4.1. Corruption in planning: A prevailing issue in South Africa and Zambia

Based on the survey results and interview data, planners in both countries registered high levels of personal and institutional experience with corruption. Nearly half (46%) of South African respondents and almost three quarters (73%) of Zambian planners surveyed had personally been asked at least occasionally to ignore or violate planning rules, policies, or procedures to achieve a particular planning outcome. Interview data corroborates this as most planners in Zambia indicated frequent encounters with untoward pressures from elected officials, developers, and political party supporters. A similar proportion of respondents – 43% in South Africa, 68% in Zambia – indicated that contracting and procurement rules were manipulated to benefit personal interests, and that colleagues, superiors, or senior officials had a personal interest in planning activities they oversaw, at least on occasion (Fig. 1).

How often at work do colleagues, superiors or senior officials with active planning oversight have a monetary or personal interest in planning outcomes?

Figure 1: Chart detailing response to survey question "How often at work do colleagues, superiors or senior officials with active planning oversight have a monetary or personal interest in planning outcomes?", percentage of respondents by country
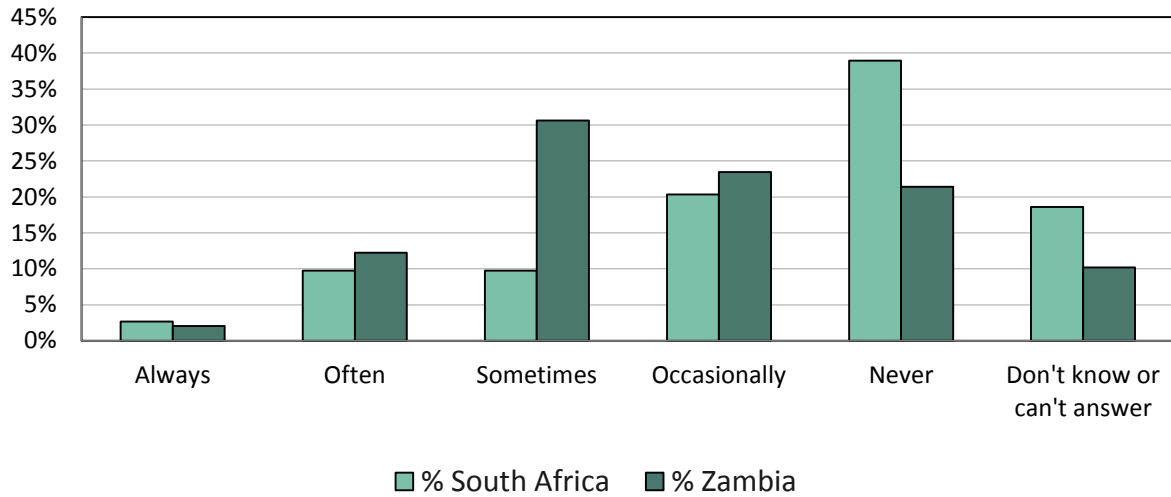
62% of Zambian planners indicated that they had been offered money or other favors from developers. The commonness of such illicit offers was further corroborated in interviews and during the QAE sessions. In contrast, only 20% of surveyed South African planners reported receiving similar offers (Fig. 2).

How often at work do developers or other interested parties offer you money or other favors illicitly in return for taking a particular action in their favor?

Figure 2: Chart detailing response to survey question "How often at work do developers or other interested parties offer you money or other favors illicitly in return for taking a particular action in their favor?", percentage of respondents by country
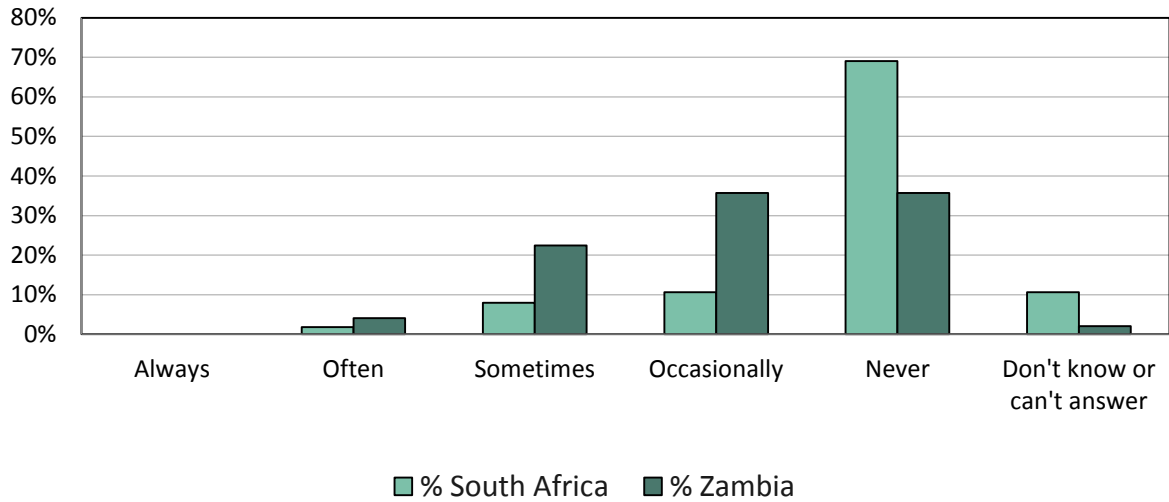
Nonetheless, respondents in both countries opine that corruption is a worsening problem for planners and for the urban development process at large (44% in South Africa and 69% in Zambia). As one senior South African planner in private practice laments:

> I don't want to be unpatriotic, but the fact of the matter is we are almost in the zeitgeist of corruption (Interview, 18 Dec. 2020).

4.1.1. Factors fueling different forms of planning corruption in South Africa and Zambia

There are a whole host of structural factors that fuel non-compliance, conflicts of interests and outright corruption in both countries' planning systems – some shared and others more country-specific. For example, in contrast to South Africa's relatively sizable planning profession, Zambia, despite significantly stepping up its training efforts over the past decade, still has too few qualified planners while the demand for planning services continues to rise alongside continuing urbanization. In consequence, the demand for planning services greatly exceeds the local supply of planning expertise. In turn, compared to their South African counterparts, a much higher share of planners in Zambia found themselves working on two sides of a planning matter at least on occasion (Fig. 3).

Do you ever find yourself in a position where you are working on two sides of a matter at the same time, e.g. preparing a land-use application for a client while also assessing the application in an official capacity?

Figure 3: Chart detailing response to survey question "Do you ever find yourself in a position where you are working on two sides of a matter at the same time, e.g. preparing a land-use application for a client while also assessing the application in an official capacity?", percentage of respondents by country
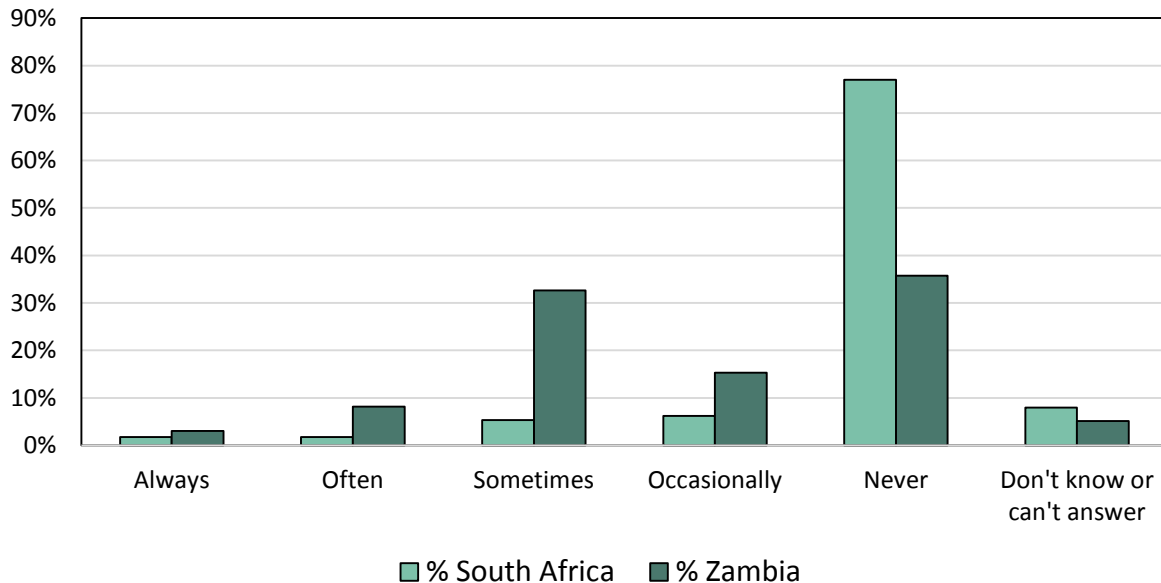
The propriety of these "private jobs" ('PJs' for short), where government planners moonlight in the private sector, while still carrying out their public mandates was thus raised as a major issue and became a central talking point during the QAE in Lusaka. Many participants acknowledged the apparent conflict of interest in working privately on a project which they, their close colleagues or superiors might also review in an official capacity. At the same time, the lack of qualified professionals in the private sector to independently complete such planning work, sparked an intense debate as to whether this in fact justified taking on private jobs. Another important factor behind the proliferation of 'PJs' is indubitably the unreliable conditions of public service in Zambian planning departments, as one interviewee noted:

> Private jobs form a key lifeline for many planners in Zambia. Salaries are not paid regularly, so we survive by doing PJs (Interview, Senior Public Sector Planner, Lusaka Province, 19 February 2020).

The above clearly reflects the intricate relationship between structural constraints and an idnvidual's ability to maintain their professional integrity. The capacity constraints of many Zambian planning authorities extend beyond infrequent salary payments and often include the lack of equipment such as vehicles for site visits, insufficient numbers of qualified planners available or allocated to a job and consequently often unsustainable workloads. In turn, developers frequently take advantage of these structural constraints by providing support in the form of transport or fieldwork allowances, thus enabling planners to do their job but also threatening their independent decision-making capacities. This conundrum creates a fertile breeding ground for corruption and provides ample opportunity for bending professional rules and abandoning professional integrity for personal gain.

In South Africa on the other hand, the range and extent of bureaucratic requirements were seen as the major driver of non-compliance and an inroad for corruption. Our respondents often described planning processes as too lengthy and burdensome, in turn putting serious pressure on planners and their clients to find alternative means of expediting the process. As one public planner put it, "the systems are inefficient, and development comes with high holding costs. So R10 000 [700 USD] to speed up a rezoning is not irrational." (Interview, 16 Apr. 2020.) Another stated:

> "As a consultant dealing with clients, you have a client wanting for things to happen. Now if you come back with excuses every time because of the bureaucracy, and this red tape, you might be easily convinced to do corruption to get things to move quicker" (Interview, Private Sector Planner, 16 Dec. 2020).

While the Zambian case illustrates how a general lack of available professionals and institutional resource constraints can create conflicts of interests that, in turn, offer opportunities for undue influence, the South African case corroborates the argument that additional bureaucratic procedures – even if aimed at creating greater transparency and oversight opportunities – can breed corruption, as drawn-out processes can lower its opportunity costs.

4.1.2. Perceptions of politics in planning and fear of political meddling

In both countries, planners reflected not only on structural challenges but also on the inherently political nature of planning. They grappled with the ways elected officials can sometimes usurp and undermine formal planning processes. Respondents generally struggled with the involvement of politicians in the planning process, with many believing that political interference was one of the major sources of corruption and unethical conduct. One senior public South African planner explained:

> Politicians don't understand oversight. There is a very thin line between oversight and interference, and they cannot differentiate between the two (Interview, 10 Dec. 2020).

In Zambia, participants related their sense that elected officials and political parties have taken over control of the planning sector. Firstly, the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) which is responsible for employment of all local government staff, including planners, is a highly politicized entity. Secondly, political party cadres enjoy high levels of impunity when it comes to meddling in land and planning-related matters. Thirdly, developers can often effortlessly collude with politicians to influence planning decisions in their favor. It is thus unsurprising that many Zambian interviewees shared emotive experiences of receiving direct planning orders from party cadres. Those who decided to stand their ground and uphold their professional integrity were in turn reported to the LGSC, which then went on to maliciously punish those planners. One of the more severe retributions were immediate transfers, often to remote districts. As one participant relayed:

> We have been made to fear, to tremble when party cadres dispute planning and land matters in our cities and towns. Being framed and accused of being anti-government or anti-development by ruling party sympathizers is very common in our work. I was taken to a very rural area from a big city on the Copperbelt, all because I stood firm against the party cadres who reported me to the mayor and the issue reached the LGSC, who swiftly removed me from Kitwe City Council (Interview, Senior Public Sector Planner, Zambia, 17 Jan. 2021).

This illustrates the severe consequences Zambian planning professionals might face when seeking to preserve their professional integrity and stand their ground against corruption. In the public domain, planners are often caught between a rock and a hard place as they are either seen as key

accomplices to land and property-related corruption or major obstructions to development if they oppose and call out illicit decisions. Hence, creating job insecurity, instilling a fear of being harmed and demanding 'blind respect' for any government decision, overall reduces the sector's professional independence.

Finally, the unrelenting pressure exerted by local politicians and private business interests on planners in both countries also informs their sobering perception that it is ultimately not the general public that is benefitting the most from urban development programs but rather senior government officials (in Zambia, see fig. 4) and private business interests (in South Africa, see fig. 5)

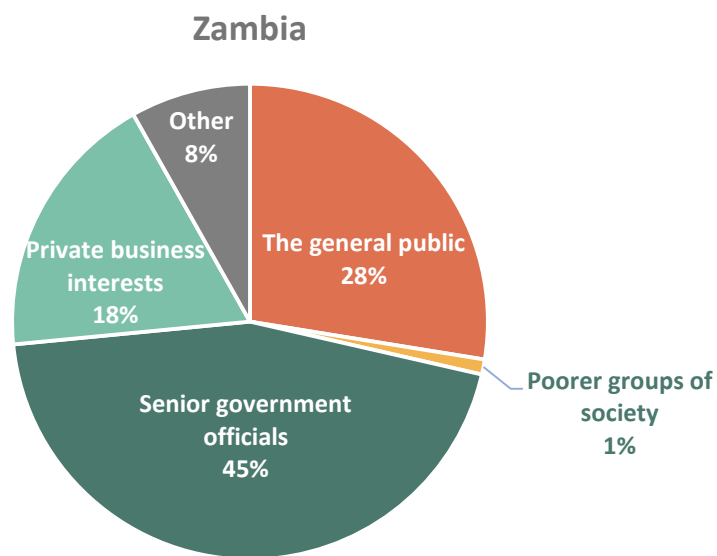In your opinion, who is benefitting most from urban development programmes?

Fig. 4: Pie chart detailing responses to the survey question "In your opinion, who is benefitting most from urban development programs?", percentage of all Zambian respondents

In your opinion, who is benefitting most from urban development programmes?
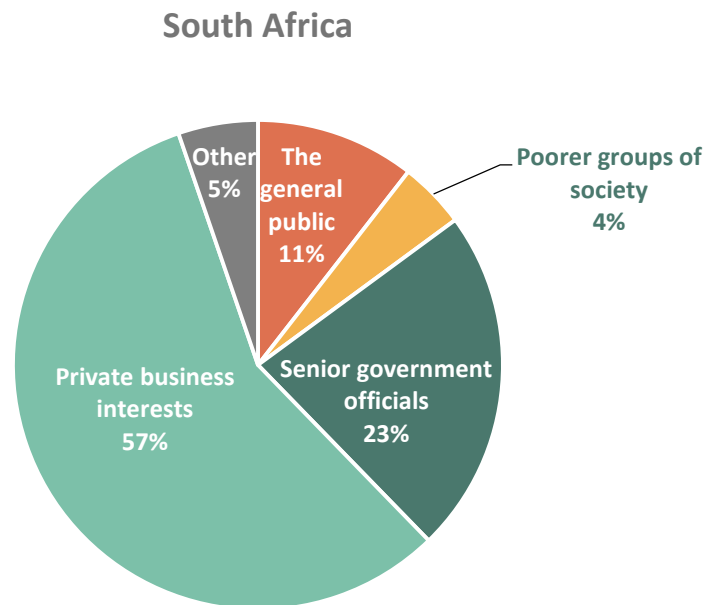
South Africa

Fig. 5: Pie chart detailing responses to the survey question "In your opinion, who is benefitting most from urban development programs?", percentage of all South African respondents

4.1.3. Compliance-focused approaches: Important yet insufficient to address the corruption challenge in South African and Zambian planning

Many survey respondents indicated that existing professional regulations and disciplinary procedures, intended to prevent or at least reduce corruption in the planning system, were not working. Just over half of respondents in both countries, 52% in South Africa and 56% in Zambia, agreed at least somewhat that applicable rules and regulations in urban development were largely unfair and gave too much influence to powerful interests. Several South African planners also commented in the survey that they believed that their professional code of conduct was not adequately enforced (e.g. noting a "[l]ack of accountability for those who flaunt the rules"), while others indicated that it was too vague, long, or complex (e.g. stating that it was "[v]ague enough to allow for manipulation and not flexible enough to consider the socio-political context").

In Zambia, ZIP has not yet developed a system of disciplinary procedures and professional development that could formally enforce a code of conduct. While the South African example shows that a this is by no means a silver bullet, the absence of a clear articulation of professional ethics means that planning remains a function of individual negotiation rather than a practice driven by informed public policy and a shared commitment to participatory decision-making. This deal-making happens largely outside of the formal planning process, with planners often merely acting as the handmaids of sectoral interests. Considering this, the call on ZIP to pass an official 'Practice Manual' was particularly strong during the second QAE event in March 2021.

Our research also generally reflected a belief amongst both South African and Zambian planners that policing compliance based on process alone was not effective enough for addressing the complex

corruption challenges faced by the profession. A recurring sentiment was that if shared professional values were neither properly articulated nor consistently enforced, there would always be room for manipulation and lack of accountability. For instance, one South African survey respondent complained that the applicable planning code was "compliance-driven and divorced from reality" while another noted that the code "was only really relevant to those who agree with the principles," suggesting that underlying ethical values were critical to the effective implementation of fair planning processes. Or, as a senior municipal official argued in one of our project's roundtable events (accessible on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWNMZUCq1d8), procedures would not compensate for a lack of substantive ethical principles held by those driving the process: "A transparent system, run by people without integrity, is equally corrupt".

Finally, the response from a junior government planner corroborates the argument, that a sole focus on compliance might not yield the desired results:

> "At the moment, focus on compliance is just for compliance's sake. I mean it is absurd rules which are open to interpretation, and you see time and time again, you can manipulate these things to whatever you want them to mean. […] It is just abstracted, and it is really not the right approach to stemming corruption." (Focus group, Cape Town, 18 Oct. 2019)

In sum, while our respondents talked at length about the manifold structural factors – such as systematic shortages of expertise, overbearing bureaucratic red tape or clientelist interests – that fuel corruption in their respective contexts, our data also attests to the role of professional agency and the importance of a shared sense of public service. While we do not suggest that structural drivers of corruption can be solely undone through individual behavior changes, sustained conversations amongst planners about the ethical hallmarks of their profession still have a role to play in terms of influencing how individual planners can act with integrity in the face of everyday corruption challenges.

5. Pivoting from compliance towards integrity? An emerging research and action agenda

Corruption is a salient, yet under-researched issue in urban scholarship and planning practice. It is also a key global policy nexus that strategically links central aspects of SDGs 11 and 16 (Nkula-Wenz, Siame and Zinnbauer, in print). We argued that identifying and understanding the context-sensitive nature of urban corruption dynamics at both the structural and local professional level is a first step in tackling it. Our empirical examination of planning realities in South Africa and Zambia largely confirms but also adds important nuance to the central theoretical conjectures about the planning corruption nexus sketched in the literature review: in both countries, corruption challenges for professional planners are significant in scale and scope and are closely interwoven with broader sets of context-specific political, economic and organizational dynamics. If taken at all, measures against corruption in the planning sector tend to focus narrowly on ensuring and bolstering compliance with existing legal and bureaucratic protocols.

At the same time, we noted that, particularly in African cities, planning outcomes are less a result of the straightforward application of technical expertise but rather of complex and power-laden practices of negotiation. As we have laid out above, given the complex reality of planning African cities against the backdrop of outdated legal frameworks, overlapping administrative and political systems, financial and human resource constraints as well as competing social, economic, environmental, and spatial needs, non-compliance with existing rules and regulations does not automatically have to equal corruption. Vice versa, it also means that formal compliance with planning laws and regulations does not automatically imply the absence of corruption (Chiodelli

2019). Thus, we suggest that for scholars to be able to truly grapple with the intractable problem of urban corruption, it is necessary to abandon the rigid compliance/non-compliance binary in favor of relational empirical analysis dedicated to understanding the broader spectrum of 'logics of appropriateness' (Ledger 2020) that planners deploy in fulfilling their fiduciary duty to the public good amidst ongoing corruption pressures.

Furthermore, how we understand African planning practice shapes not only how we conceptualize corruption in it but also how we might be able to respond to it. If we understand corruption as more than just a lack of compliance, then we need to ask: What alternative mechanisms could be deployed to tackle it? Here, our research resonates with recent advances in anti-corruption scholarship that point to the promotion of professional integrity as a complimentary way to addressing corruption (Heywood & Rose 2015; Menzel 2015).

Based on our empirical findings, we propose that for both urban planning scholarship and practice, pivoting from a compliance focus towards a more inclusive perspective on professional integrity allows for a substantive shift in at least three ways: First, it moves normative goals away from simply avoiding corruption and towards promoting a more holistic professional conduct; one that seeks to achieve planning outcomes in alignment with fiduciary duties and a broader set of collective values firmly anchored in the public interest. Second, it enables a much broader – yet arguably also more complicated – view onto the contextual dynamics that planners need to content with in their daily practice. Grappling with these real-life intricacies of planning African cities thus also directs our attention to a much richer, context-sensitive array of possible levers and interventions to combat urban corruption. And finally, using Ledger's 'logics of appropriateness' to understand how planners manage to establish the normative validity of their professional actions, provides a more relational approach to understanding what constitutes 'good and fair conduct' in context and not least in the face of high levels of informality that characterize most African cities.[1]

While more research is certainly needed to conceive of specific interventions to harness professional integrity and to test their efficacy, the experimental component of our research already surfaced a few interesting pointers: For example, when thinking through the widespread phenomenon of private jobs among Zambia's planning officials, simply emphasizing that these practices are illegal does not recognize the socio-economic and political realities that influence planning and planners. Instead, it may be more useful to openly acknowledge this practice within the profession and collectively explore ways of managing related conflicts of interests.

As anti-corruption research has argued for some time now, it is also not about a few 'rotten apples', i.e., corrupt individuals that abuse an otherwise good system. Rather, it is about fixing the rotten barrel, i.e., the broader organizational and bureaucratic context that will also 'spoil' the good ones (Weaver & Treviño 1999; Ashforth & Anand 2003; Kish-Gephart et al. 2010). Here, professional planning organizations like SACPLAN and ZIP as the designated custodians of national planning norms, values and ethics have a key role to play. In both South Africa and Zambia, respondents regarded professional training courses on ethics and integrity as priority measures to be taken by their respective professional association. However, as our research shows, for such initiatives to not become 'tick box exercises' it is important to understand the local planning context and its specific

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[1] These points have also informed a three-part series of animated short films, which introduce the salience of the urban planning and corruption nexus to a broader audience and provide a case study on planning integrity in practice, using the example of a Zambian market. The videos can be accessed on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXS-IOulJHM&list=PL6YKlvsHY3r44POEB457uMbf0o768ZOBH

corruption pressures first, before workshopping appropriate tactics and tools to activate and bolster professional integrity.

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